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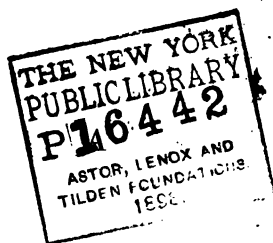
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VOICE FROM IRELAND

UPON

MATTERS OF PRESENT CONCERN.

ADDRESSED TO

LEGISLATORS AND MINISTERS OF STATE.

BY

DANIEL O'ROURKE, ESQ.

"Dare you for this adjure the civil sword,
To force our consciences that Christ set free,
And ride us with a classic hierarchy."—MILTON.

LONDON:

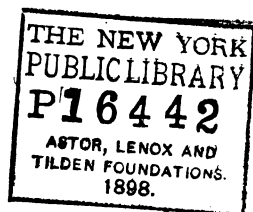
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J.W.D.

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A VOICE FROM IRELAND,

&c.

AFTER a long season of misrule, commensurate at least with English domination, Ireland has at length put forth her voice, and in accents sufficiently loud and intelligible to make herself heard and understood. Whether it will be responded to by our legislators is still a matter of doubtful speculation; and the more so when we consider the deeply-seated nature of the disease, and the limited view that is taken of it by statesmen in general. That the case is an urgent one seems to be generally admitted, although the spirit of procrastination that hovers over our councils betokens a cloudless atmosphere rather than one that is charged with the elements of civil strife.

With a fine country and a grateful soil affording every advantage for cultivation and commerce, and with a hardy race of people, easily aroused by a sense of wrong, but susceptible of the kind and generous feelings, nature seems to have thrown away her choicest gifts, and to have inflicted a curse upon the land instead of a blessing. Yet it is not the work of nature but of misgovernment, arising really but not necessarily from British connection; the result of bad policy and of unjust laws, originating in ignorance and rapacity, and persevered in from the same causes. Whether the condition of the people would have been materially improved had they remained independent is now only matter of speculation; but as the capabilities of nature are the same in Ireland as in England, there is no reason to suppose that civilization and improvement would not have taken the same course, the facilities for both being equal. Something, indeed, may be laid to the account of the reformation in religion, which made but small progress in Ireland; but the practical working of the two systems, when united with state-policy, is not so widely different as to produce the enormous disparity between the two countries which some religious zealots may imagine.

In order to illustrate the subject we will suppose a case. The island of Great Britain shall be conquered by some European nation, the Russians for instance, who shall plant a colony, and partition the lands of the natives amongst their own nobles. The

Greek religion as a matter of course becomes established by law, with full possession of the tithes and other church-property, no person of any other faith being allowed to acquire land, to be eligible to serve in any department of the state, nor to assume any command naval or military; for the Greek Church being that of the state is paramount to the religion of the majority. Can it be supposed that under such circumstances England would be the prosperous country she now is? Or rather, would not the land groan beneath the burden of its taskmasters, and the people become mere hewers of wood and drawers of water? Yet just so has it been with Ireland. Treated as a conquered country, the land confiscated to foreigners, tithes and church-property alienated to the clergy of a different religion, the natives reduced to a state of villanage, proscribed the right of acquiring property or of holding any other than menial offices in the land that gave them birth, it is not surprising that ignorance and poverty should overspread the people, nor that they should pant for an opportunity of hurling vengeance upon their oppressors.

That the condition of the Irish people was exactly such as is here described is within the recollection of persons now living; and the statute-book will proclaim it to posterity. If their political state has undergone some amelioration of late years, it has been doled out too grudgingly and evidently too late to be of any essential benefit. Besides, their long accumulated wrongs have struck too deep into the soil,

and have entwined too closely around the fabric of English society to warrant the hope that Ireland will ever by concession acquire a government founded on the laws of nature, of reason and of common sense. I wish for the sake of both countries that it may be otherwise, for they possess interests in common; and if governed by equal laws and just institutions there would be no impediment to a cordial union. But we are not to be misled by the fair speeches and fair promises of mistaken men, any more than by the vapouring of those who lie in wait to deceive. The wounds of a nation may be cauterized, but we miscalculate if we think by a local application to cure a disorder that is generated in the system. We may close the wound in one place, but the disease will break out in another. To grapple with it effectually requires not only talents and penetration, but a degree of moral courage that falls to the lot of few statesmen; for there is much prejudice to overcome, and many adverse interests to deal with. The pacification of Ireland can be effected by no ordinary mind; it must be the triumph of reason and justice over bigotry and selfishness.

“ Who sees her dismal *wrongs* but would demand,
What barbarous invader *ruled* the land? ”

Short-sighted politicians are too apt to over-rate the value of a particular measure which however just and proper in itself is only of partial benefit, and

confined in its operation. The Catholic Relief Bill was a case of this sort. Sanguine men lauded it as a talisman, that was to quiet discontent and produce a harvest of human happiness; and they were led into this error by some who were too cunning to undeceive them. Although predicated as a final measure, (and its full and comprehensive character warranted the term so far as the subject-matter of it was concerned,) yet those who took a larger view of human affairs knew well that it would neither instruct the ignorant, feed the hungry, nor clothe the naked; that it left a nation of Catholics under the legal control of a handful of Protestants; and that it overlooked those questions of internal policy which are of more importance to a people than an attention to the squabbles of adverse sects. The measure was in itself only an act of justice, a partial restoration of rights that had been withheld by legal violence, so ill-timed indeed as to be a surrender of power that could be no longer retained, the grace of concession being lost to the government and forced from it by a people greatly in advance in intelligence.* Such indeed has always

* This measure. however, partook of the same sectarian spirit that mars all our legislation, and renders it so far inoperative. By one of the clauses Roman Catholic legislators were restrained from voting upon any measure affecting the Church of England, as if they were sent to parliament by their constituents to waive their civil rights and become the puppets of a religion they abhor. But a provision so contrary to reason and common sense, although submitted to from motives of policy, could not be otherwise than futile;

been the case with those legislative acts that are styled *concessions*, but received as rights. Louis XVIII is said to have granted a charter to the French people, as the price of the Restoration; but this act of royal condescension will be inscribed upon the page of history as a specimen of the ludicrous.

“ Who gives constrained, but his own fear reviles,
Not thanked, but scorned, nor are they gifts but spoils.”

If the Irish were called into existence as an independent nation free from the control and interference of foreigners, there can be no doubt that with good institutions, their natural advantages combined with those which are to be derived from knowledge and science, would enable them to advance in civilization and refinement as rapidly as other nations under the like circumstances. But to obtain these results, it is not necessary that Ireland should be separated from British connexion, which might be made advantageous to both countries. All that is wanting is a paternal government, equal laws, and facilities for developing the natural advantages of the country, and the capabilities of its inhabitants. In order to this there are obstructions that require to be removed, and

and it gave a bounty to deception by encouraging those evasions which will necessarily flow from a struggle between natural right and political subserviency. So long as churches furnish a subject for legislation, men will exercise their inalienable right of deciding upon their merits all acts to the contrary notwithstanding.

nature must be assisted to unfold herself in the forms productive of civilization. Under an enlightened system of government Ireland which is now the weakness of England would become her strength, and possessing interests in common would respond in attachment, superseding the necessity of physical restraint to support a hollow union; a method as costly as it is barbarous.

In spite of the oppressions under which my countrymen have so long groaned, they possess a sufficient share of political information to render them uneasy under their wrongs, and to inspire them with a wish for rational improvement. For this they are to be commended, although not for the means they resort to in the expression of their displeasure. Scenes of violence and bloodshed cannot be contemplated without dismay, but it is a state of things that flows naturally from a degraded moral and political condition. A people but partially civilized is restrained with difficulty even by wise and beneficent laws; but when these are founded in palpable injustice they address themselves to the ruder feelings, and a sense of injury sharpens the appetite for vengeance upon the oppressor. It is also deserving remark, that long continued feuds amongst a people living under the same dominion, especially when they proceed to acts of open hostility, can have no other effect than to produce a savageness of manners, and a lawlessness of conduct calculated to undermine all those ties that are essential to the stability of the social system.

It is quite impossible that so unnatural a state of things can continue much longer without compromising the peace of the whole empire. The union that cements the relations between the two countries has been hitherto only nominal, and maintained purely by physical force as in the case of a dependent colony. An union, to be perfect, must be founded in a sympathy of feeling and an amalgamation of interests ; to be lasting, the people must be incorporated as well as their respective countries ; they must possess the same political institutions and be governed by the same laws ; their feelings must be equally respected, and every thing in the shape of favouritism must be wholly discarded. Instead of treating them as slaves and outcasts, they must have free scope for their enterprise and industry ; in short, they must cherish respect for their institutions, and then they will feel an interest in their preservation. These, however, must be based upon reason and justice, as alone adequate to the purposes of stable and good government.

The rapid tendency towards the disorganization of Ireland, has been traced by one sect of politicians to the plotting of priests and the aspiring views of political demagogues ; whilst others are equally confident that another class of priests and politicians is to be held responsible for the mischief. Whatever ground there may be to regret the existence of so mischievous a state of things, it is quite certain that none but short sighted statesmen could make so glar-

ing a mistake as to confound the cause with the effect; and it serves to show how easily knowledge and experience may be thrown away upon men, otherwise respectable, when they become the slaves of a system identified with their interests, or with long cherished political theories. When the embers of discontent are kindled through the varied ramifications of society, they furnish a natural hot bed for agitation, and any person possessed of superior moral power will create for himself an influence over his contemporaries in proportion to the strength of his abilities, and the value of the materials that call them into action. But discontent cannot prevail extensively without an adequate cause, and this may be traced most generally to unjust laws, or to oppressive government. If we do but trouble ourselves to look beyond the surface of things, we may find sufficient cause for popular discontent without the aid of any disagreeable agitator whom it may have chanced to call into being. The course of nature, unaided by violence, will remove such from the stage of existence; but so long as the wounds of a nation are allowed to fester, there will never be wanting capable persons to exhibit their humours to the public gaze.

So far as we can judge by present appearances, Ireland seems to be the theatre upon which are to be decided all those great principles concerning the nature of government which have been obscured by ignorance, or perverted by selfishness and bigotry. The political errors that have had such a withering

effect upon the people call now so loudly for redress as to supersede every other question in importance ; and upon the course that legislation shall take in this matter the destinies of the whole empire are in a manner suspended. Ireland is now no longer that insignificant portion of the British dominions which can justify with impunity an ignominious treatment from the hands of its rulers. With a native population sufficiently numerous to assert its independence, impressed with a strong sense of political degradation, united in one faith, and influenced by a power that can easily bring them to act together for a common purpose, it is the path of wisdom, no less than of sound policy, to repudiate all those distinctions which serve to keep up separate interests in different portions of the empire. It is only under the fostering care of beneficent institutions based upon the principles of justice and impartiality, and a recognition of equal political rights, that we can hope to quiet discontent, or to govern a people through any other medium than the ruinous one of brute force. This ungracious mode has been tried long enough to expose its folly, and to teach us that the liberty so highly prized by one class of people is equally good for another.

This anomalous state of things has necessarily forced the ecclesiastical establishment into the foremost ground as one of those master grievances that requires an immediate removal. With a hostile population, it is absurd upon the face of it to keep up so expensive a machinery by a tax upon those to

whom it yields neither pleasure nor profit. Although the interests of religion be the pretence, none but the infatuated can suppose that they are at all served by so monstrous an abuse ; and the cause of Protestantism suffers materially by it. As an instrument of conversion it has wholly failed, and indeed lost ground, for the adherents to this system have not kept pace with the population. Had the Presbyterians received the same encouragement from the government as the episcopal church, the effect would, in all probability, have been widely different, and we should have had a well-taught Protestant population to deal with, as in Scotland, instead of an uncivilized race of Catholics. But it was the policy of the civil power to persecute this party at the instigation of the church-rampant, and we are now reaping a full harvest of consequences. If bigotry were not as blind as a bat, its mischievous policy would be as apparent as the savageness of its character.

Whatever advantages the Church of Ireland may be supposed to possess, and really possesses, for those clerical idlers who draw their incomes from the country to spend in the fashionable towns and watering places of England, all the real service which it is calculated to effect may be performed at a much cheaper rate, and through a less offensive process. Certain it is that until something be done to set this question at rest for ever, and there is but one way in which it can be done effectually, both countries will

be kept in a state of injurious excitement, the wheels of government will be clogged under whatever ministry, and the other business of the country will continue at a stand still. We are now arrived at a crisis when it becomes statesmen to look this monster fully in the face. It is of no use to trifle with the people by attempting to prolong its existence under a less obnoxious form. The times for reformation are passed already. Nothing short of the entire downfall of this political vampire, which has lived but too long upon the blood of the people can now satisfy the demands of justice, or meet the real wants of the case. However startling to the nerves of timid statesmen, the doom of the church, as a political institution, is sealed, and if it be not allowed a quiet death, the vials of wrath will overtake it to the uttermost. Protestantism whether episcopal or presbyterian, must henceforth stand upon its own merits, and seek nothing in the way of exclusive patronage, which has been hitherto a foil to its success.

Those who have watched the course of argument employed by politicians upon this subject, cannot have failed to notice the extremely narrow ground upon which it is built. The interests of a whole nation are supposed to be wrapped up in the patronage of some twelve or fifteen hundred persons bearing the name of Protestant clergymen, whose fate is to rule that of eight millions of people. Representing as they do but a tenth part of the nation, they are made by a political fiction to represent the whole ;

and in and for them the remaining nine tenths live and move and have their being. It is upon this absurd hypothesis that legislation takes its course. The Irish people when weighed in the balances with a Protestant hierarchy are found lighter than vanity ; and it is in subserviency to this monstrous usurpation upon the rights and liberties of mankind, that they are allowed a political existence.

Looking at the subject gravely, it is not surprising that human nature should rebel at such a perversion of justice, such a mockery of government. If nations are to be considered in the light of slaves, subject to the caprice of political factions, or the assumed superiority of this or the other sect of religionists upon the presumption of a patent from heaven for their opinions, then it may be all very well to treat them as such ; and it would be only honest to let them know it, that they may resign themselves patiently to their hapless fate. But if men are not beasts of burden created for the purpose of being ridden by a few favourites of fortune, whether of heavenly or of earthly origin ; if they are possessed of those physical powers and intellectual faculties that are usually assigned to them ; if government be an expedient arising out of the wants and infirmities of our nature, intended to supply the one and to counteract the other ; if the object of political institutions be the attainment of those social benefits which are precarious in the savage state ; and finally, if reason, justice, and humanity are of any value in the direc-

tion of human affairs, then those who are entrusted with their management are imperiously called upon for those measures which can alone secure the beneficial results.

It has been the misfortune of this great empire that its destinies have been ruled too much by a class of men who deserve no higher appellation than that of petty statesmen ; and such are all those who view mankind through the narrow medium of sect or party, sacrificing national objects to religious rancour or political favouritism. Hence it is, that they have acted as a dragchain upon improvement, repressing the energies of the people, stifling or corrupting their finer feelings, and resolving the art of government into a system of chicanery, intrigue and deception. If the country has risen to a state of unexampled prosperity, if knowledge and science have made their way by rapid strides, and if a moral tone has been impressed upon any portion of society, these things have fallen out in spite of the government, by the natural force of human power breaking through the fetters that have been forged for its restraint, by unwise and impolitic legislation. From this serious charge neither of the great political parties that have led the people of this empire can claim an exemption. If the proofs were wanted, they are to be found in every debate upon ecclesiastical affairs, in which the broad outlines of ancient errors furnish the materials for hostile feeling and unmanly prejudice. The natural result is partial, unjust, and inefficient

legislation, an alienation of mind from the authors of such folly, and a dissatisfaction with those political institutions that interfere with a government for national purposes.

The struggle now maintained by the aristocracy and its retainers to exclude the people of Ireland from any share in governing themselves, is but a continuation of the old exclusive system, based upon sectarian and antinational prejudices, and terminating in political favouritism. By concentrating instead of diffusing the powers of government, it seeks for nothing more nor less than a practical despotism, to be exercised by those who may chance to possess the seals of office ; a despotism be it observed, not of one man partaking of the qualities of a paternal government like some of the small states upon the continent, but a despotism of party, carried on through the medium of an exclusive body of ecclesiastics, and that representing only a small fractional part of the community. Such a scheme of government is the more odious, because, it is attempted to be perpetrated through the forms and under the mask of liberty, and it is the more dangerous, because, so far as the great body of the people is concerned, it involves to all intents and purposes an irresponsible power.

There is also much hypocrisy mixed up with the matter ; for in spite of all the noisy zeal for protestantism, it is quite evident that state-craft involving also church-craft has much more to do with it than

religion. But if it could be shewn that the feeling displayed is purely of a religious character (as may be true of a few fanatics) and that church of Irelandism is the best devised system that the wit of man has invented, still, it would be quite beside the purpose, for it so happens, that the people think otherwise, and their religion being the best in their own apprehension, they have a perfect right to set up the same pretensions for it as the men of the dominant church.

But the population is Catholic, and people of that religion, we are gravely told, are unfit to be trusted with local governments, from which they would exclude the Protestants. This is only saying in other words, "You Catholics when you have the power will act towards us Protestants precisely in the same manner that we have been acting towards you; and as we happen to possess the power, we will keep it as long as we can." If political institutions are to be regulated by the narrow conceptions of rival sects, the design of government is lost, and the longest sword must prevail. No man in his senses will contend that Catholics, as such, have not as much right to the advantages of civil government as Protestants, or that they are less competent to exercise their rights. Forming as they now do an overwhelming majority in Ireland, it is natural that the largest share of power should fall to their hands; and they are entitled to it upon the same principle that Church of England Protestants engross the larger share of power

in England. If they turn it against the Protestants, it will be owing chiefly to the hostility which these have cherished towards them, and it may require a generation or two before the religion of wrath, common now to both parties, shall be superseded by that of kindness and good feeling. In other countries where the government is sufficiently strong to keep them from quarelling, the two parties notwithstanding the exclusive character of their tenets, live in harmony together. It has been the baneful policy of the British government to create a distinction of castes amongst the people by exclusive laws and privileges, followed by a long and fruitless attempt to dragoon them to one uniform set of opinions; exciting the jealousy and ill will of those who suffered by such distinctions, and exposing itself to mockery for conduct so utterly opposed to every thing like reason, the use of which was in fact the only pretence for a reformation.

It has ever been a prevailing idea amongst Church of England Protestants, that they are the only people upon earth who are entitled to hold the reins of government. Upon what pretence so monstrous a notion could have been founded, is beyond the province of reason to comprehend; but the history of our country, confirmed by a reference to the Statute book, to say nothing of the writers for the establishment sufficiently attests the fact. To confirm the arrogant assumption, clergy and laity have played into each others hands, imposing upon the deluded

multitude by setting up their own narrow turnpikes to the next world, in order to establish a solid authority in the one we are now concerned with. It is therefore in perfect consistency that they prescribe faith and submission to others, seeing they are precluded the necessity of practising those duties themselves. If reason had any thing to do with government, the fallacy of such a claim would be immediately apparent, but as ignorance and credulity go together, knavery is always sure to make its market of them. Roman Catholics, in rejecting reason when opposed to church authority, act consistently however absurdly in their proscription of other sects; but Protestants who appeal to it in theory whilst they discard it in practice, are less excusable. That churchmen are wiser, or better instructed in the art of government than other people, are points that will not be readily conceded; although they have certainly taken the most effectual methods to shut out knowledge from all but themselves. The scheme however has not answered. Man, although born like a wild ass's colt, will fain be wise; and in spite of all the impediments that are thrown in his way by absurd monopolies he will prefer knowledge to ignorance; and if he cannot slake his thirst at a party-coloured fountain that sends forth sweet waters and bitter, he will seek another stream not liable to the same heavy toll. In the natural world, God dispenses his favours impartially, He causes his sun to rise upon the evil and upon the good, and his rain to descend upon the just

and upon the unjust. Human governments order their affairs somewhat differently, and claim a divine patent for reversing the order of nature. In the days of ignorance, the fiction succeeded by virtue of its own inherent power, but since the spell has been broken, it has been found necessary to bring more earthly weapons to its support. These however will prove feeble bulwarks to a system that is opposed to nature, whose secrets it is the business of knowledge to unfold. As men grow wiser, which they will do in default of the learned lumber that is dealt out to them in the exclusionary schools, they will find out that government is only useful in so far as it is rendered applicable to the exigencies of human nature, for the developement of man's physical powers, the cultivation of his intellectual faculties, and the subjection of his moral nature to the great purposes of his social existence. Nations will then learn that they possess rights in common, which can be forfeited only by the commission of crime; that whatever varieties exist in their creeds, their colour or their occupations, these affect not their relation to the state, which protects all equally, and dispenses its favours impartially, without respect to person or party. Whatever claims to civilization may be advanced by any people, they have made but small progress in it until they have learnt to respect that liberty in others which they would claim for themselves.

The extension of popular institutions to Ireland upon the principle of pure nationality, that is, without

respect to sect or party, would no doubt be fatal to Protestant ascendancy, as it would in any country where the Protestants are in so decided a minority. But if this be an evil, it must succumb to superior claims, for men possess rights as members of civil society paramount to the pretensions of churches. To avert a calamity so much dreaded by the ascendant party, we are told that the mass of the people are ignorant, and priest-ridden, therefore incapable of political rights, and that to concede them would be only transferring the power from one party to another, or from hands the most capable to those that are the least so. This is the way that churchmen have always argued and acted, presuming upon their fancied superiority, and strutting about under the protection of exclusive privileges, to which they possess no rational claim beyond any other class of their fellow-subjects. As to the ignorance of the Irish, it is a matter that should have been thought of some century or two ago, and might easily have been remedied by a portion of those endowments which have been squandered so uselessly in pampering a few idle ecclesiastics. Had the people been better instructed by those who were paid so profusely for that purpose, Protestants would not have reason to complain now of their being priest-ridden. The real truth is, that the Catholics have been active and diligent in their calling, whilst the clergy of the endowed church have been busied in counting the loaves and fishes.

Whether the systems of faith and worship adopted by Protestants, or the more uniform *credenda* of Catholics be most consonant to the scheme of Christianity, or whether its true design and spirit have not been evaporated in both, are questions wholly beside the real object of civil government. With the logical disputes of theologians, which have given rise to contradictory formularies of faith, and with the variety of tastes as to traditionary rites and ceremonies it meddles not, and for a very obvious reason; they are matters which concern only man's spiritualities, or his visions of another world, and are not likely to be decided before the day of judgment. Whereas, civil government is a temporal affair only, reaching to man's conduct in the present world, and providing the best means for its regulation so as to prevent injury, and to produce the greatest amount of temporal good.

I am far from wishing to undervalue the points in dispute between the rival parties. They are no doubt of more or less importance as affecting their hopes and expectations, and also as bearing upon national manners; but being matters of speculation founded upon different modes of interpretation, or upon the testimony of tradition, they can be solved only by reason and research, not by civil authority. So absurd a mode of deciding controversies would never have been thought of but for the rich rewards with which it has been associated. Serving as so many baits to ambition, they have obscured the un-

derstanding, weakened the moral sense, and destroyed the charities of life. Instead of fostering the religious feeling, and enforcing the mild tenour of Christianity, they have been the means of calling into play the worst passions of our nature, and of turning religion into a system of worldly policy. Whatever may be thought by politicians, this is exactly the light in which the Irish Church is viewed by serious Protestants; whilst the Catholics consider it as no better than a political device to plunder them of their property under the pretence of religion.

It is easy to perceive that the sudden zeal which has taken possession of Protestants, urging them to a new crusade against the errors of Popery, is prompted more by an anxiety for the ecclesiastical revenues which are supposed to be in danger, than by any religious consideration. Hence it is, that we hear so much of spoliation, and so little of the virtue of Christian charity. The difference between the two systems is far from being so great as some would wish us to believe. For setting aside a few tenets derived from the schoolmen, or from the earlier ages of the church, their symbols and their ceremonies are nearly the same, and their dependence upon tradition equally so. The pretensions of both also rest upon church-authority, derived from the antiquarian notion of apostolical succession; a cunning device for laying burdens upon men's shoulders too heavy to be borne. In spite of the boasted

saying of Chillingworth, which contains more sound than substance, the religion of Protestants (at least the state-division of them) is based wholly upon Acts of Parliament which prescribe what they are to believe, and how they are to worship, as effectually as the Council of Trent has performed the same kind office for the Romanists. It is also remarkable that the circulation of the Bible without the interpretation of the church is an object of equal jealousy and aversion with both; the Catholics requiring the assistance of a priest for the purpose, the Protestants a compilation of *their* priests called the Liturgy, or Book of Common Prayer. The tactics of both parties will be admired for their ingenuity in seeking to forestal the judgment and to entrap mankind into an implicit faith.

We have had much noisy declamation about robbery and spoliation, although the less that is said about such things by Protestants the better; for it would be an awkward discovery in tracing the history of Church property if we were to find it wrested from the Catholics in the first instance, and given by the civil power to its present possessors. It might then appear, that spoliation is by no means of modern date, and some serious questions might arise as to how far the law of the land in this particular is in harmony with some late decisions in equity.* Upon

* It has been ruled by the judges in the matter of Lady Hewley that property bequeathed for charitable purposes can be rightly administered only by and for the benefit of persons holding the same religious tenets as the donor.

so ticklish a subject it would be wise in the clergy and their friends to abstain from provoking discussion, and to push forward the instruction of the people at some sacrifice to their own cupidity. The debates that have arisen upon the appropriation of church property are better suited to a conclave of priests than to an assembly of statesmen. So far as the principle is concerned, it is no longer a subject for debate, having been solved in England three centuries ago, and since then by the most Catholic states upon the continent. The power that took it in the first instance can take it again, either to restore it to its former possessors, or to render it more available to the general interests of the people. It is too late in the day to set up the bugbear of sacrilege, which cannot be committed by a whole nation, nor by a majority of its representatives.

Church property is held in trust principally, but not wholly, for the instruction of the people; religious instruction, no doubt, originally, after the fashion of the Catholics, but diverted since then to another fashion in use by a particular section of Protestants. History teaches us, that fashions in religion change as in other things, and when this is the case, the state usually becomes the sponsor. The change in Ireland has answered only in the way of enriching a small number of privileged individuals, quite beside the intention of the founders, and certainly without any extensive benefit to the people. A further change is therefore required by the circumstances

of the case, and as it cannot be expected to proceed from the interested parties, it must be taken in hand, as heretofore, by the state. Had the present system worked well, the Irish would not be the ignorant priest-ridden people they are represented, the one being the natural consequence of the other.

It was formerly the aim of our wise legislators to fight priestcraft with its own weapons; but the Protestant priests proved mere bunglers, and pocketed the pay without producing any trophies from the enemy. Within little more than a century the population of Ireland has nearly quadrupled, the increase being immeasurably in favour of the Catholics. This would scarcely have been the case, if the clergy of the endowed church had not slumbered at their posts, after exhausting their ingenuity in making war upon other Protestants. The battle was fought in the reign of Queen Anne, but the blows were all on one side. One half of the Protestants then, as now, were Presbyterians, being the descendants of those who had taken refuge in Ireland from the persecution that awaited them in their own country under a Protestant government. Others had emigrated from Scotland after the revolution, from a spirit of commercial enterprize then rising in that country, and employed their capital in the establishment of manufactures, and other pursuits of industry. Many of them having acquired wealth, obtained that influence in society which is its natural consequence, finding their way into Parliament, and

the bench of magistrates. As the two sections of Protestants when combined were greatly out-numbered by the Catholics, although not in the same fearful disproportion as in the present day, the number of Catholics being then but a million and a half, it was their evident policy to live in harmony together, for mutual protection against the common enemy. But so prudent and Christian a course was ~~not~~ in accordance with ecclesiastical politics, and state-craft lent its aid to one of the parties to play the game of the Catholics. Although the episcopal party was in full enjoyment of all the church revenues, and engrossed every office of profit in the state, yet such was its grasping character that it could not slumber in peace so long as a vestige of honourable distinction was shared by other Protestants. The Irish Parliament having passed an Act "To prevent the growth of Popery," the ministers of that pious queen, imitating the policy of former reigns, took care that its edge should be pointed against the Presbyterians; and a clause for that purpose was inserted by the English cabinet. By this measure one half of the Protestants were placed by a single blow without the pale of the constitution. In the province of Ulster nearly all the magistrates were swept from the bench, and their places supplied by clergymen or raw adventurers. Many in consequence, left the country, and others who would have embarked their capital and industry there, preferred staying at home. The natural consequence of this

blunder in legislation was to divide the Protestants, to raise up new enemies to the endowed church, and to alienate the affections of a larger portion of the people. The wise concocters of this new scheme for reducing the Catholics, if they did not succeed in their declared object, had reason to rejoice in its efficacy for weakening the Protestants, and for circumscribing the motives to loyalty within the limits of a narrow monopoly. It required the experience of half a century and upwards to correct the errors of these insane bigots; but in the meantime, the Catholics grew and multiplied, whilst the bloated favourites of an exclusive system rioted in the smiles of fortune.

It might have been supposed without any great stretch of credulity that the clergy of "the best constituted church in the world" would have been doubly diligent in the discharge of their duties with so much to encourage them. But not so; many of them quitted their posts, or slumbered in their stalls, consigning their flocks to the care of strangers, upon journeyman's wages. The benefit of clergy has been a most wholesome provision for such holy idlers in other senses than the legal one; otherwise they would have stood in most dreadful danger of having the laws executed against them as receivers of money under false pretences. That the Catholics should have prospered with so fair a field before them is not surprising; for they had not only the edge of oppression, but the apathy of their oppo-

nents to stimulate their exertions. It is only of late years that they have been aroused from their slumbers by the enterprize of other sects; whilst an alarm for the safety of their revenues has imparted new life and vigour to their movements. But it is now too late to recover the ground that has been lost through the mistaken policy of former times, and it only remains to make the best use we can of a population essentially Catholic.

If any thing were wanting to shew the fatal effects of misguided zeal in narrowing the principles of government, it is furnished by the present state of Ireland. The exclusive church-policy has spread its contaminating influence through the veins of society, contracting the avenues to education, impeding the career of industry, and destroying those social feelings which flow from a free and friendly intercourse. It is also responsible for those unnatural limitations to the acquisition of property which, wherever they exist, can have no other effect than to entail poverty and wretchedness upon the many, amidst the abundance which they produce for the gratification of the few. The bitter feelings it has engendered throughout society, destroying the peace of neighbourhoods, and placing men of different opinions in hostile collision with each other, serve to swell the long catalogue of evils which may be found in the train of this mighty engine of mischief, forged for the disturbance of mankind.

Ireland presents at this day the singular phenomenon of a richly endowed ecclesiastical establishment to which nine-tenths of the population are hostile in principle, and not a little so in practice. Yet to a system built upon so narrow and exclusive a basis, each one is bound to contribute his support; a reluctant one to be sure from those who not only derive no benefit from it whatever, but consider it an object of strong aversion. That the laws enacted for its protection should prove feeble bulwarks, is the natural consequence of so vicious a state of things. Legislation to be respected must be founded in justice; but no law can be just, that taxes nine-tenths of a nation for the exclusive benefit of a small sect, however pompous its pretensions.

There has been much fiery contention about the suppression of a few ecclesiastical sinecures to form a fund for general education. The possibility of a surplus arising from these suppressions has been stoutly denied; as if a single living, not to speak of higher preferments, would produce nothing. And nothing certainly would be produced if the sinecures proposed to be abolished were transferred to the willing hands of other recipients. These are a part of God's creation that are constantly crying "Give, give!" and the indulgence of the state has ever responded to the note. Whilst the ignorant multitude have been imposed upon by false pretences, and others have been led away by their feelings, the

crafty politician has taken advantage of their credulity, and availed himself of a powerful succour in furtherance of his ambition. That which in reality is a civil question is ingeniously converted into a religious one, because the passions of mankind are more easily moved in this way, and it supplies abundant materials for mystification. The controversy between Catholics and Protestants, which might be left to be settled between themselves, has been incorporated with political discussions, in order to divert the mind from the real question ; the rapacity of Papists has been largely insisted upon, as if they were the only people in the world who cling to the temporal rewards of piety ; and we are gravely told that to devote the smallest portion of the church's revenues to the instruction of so blind and infatuated a people, would be a bounty upon error and superstition. In the minds of reasonable men, education would be considered as the most effectual cure for these maladies. But reason has a small influence with those who have been trained in the arts of political jugglery. It has been the policy of churchmen to hedge round the avenues to knowledge ; and when it has found vent in spite of their monopoly, they have practised the most deceptive methods to destroy its value.

Much of the feeling now abroad upon this subject is akin to the old leaven of intolerance ; much of it savours of presumption. It is only by an act of legal violence that Protestants hold any portion of church

property. If equity were to arbitrate the matter, the whole, or nearly so, would be restored to the Catholics as the rightful owners; or if the state be the trustee of property bestowed for national uses, which is the more rational view of it, then the whole nation may be made to reap the benefit without regard to those fluctuations in opinion, which are continually taking place in society. It certainly was never intended by the donors, that property bequeathed in Catholic times, should be transferred to a handful of people whom they would consider in the light of heretics; a course of proceeding as monstrous in principle, as it is unjust in practice. This is such a mode of dealing with mankind, that nothing but the most odious bigotry combined with political motives could have enabled it to endure so long. We reproach the people for their ignorance and superstition, and make these a pretence for withholding from them their civil rights; yet for their barbarous condition, the vicious policy of a Protestant government is alone responsible.

If any one should be weak enough to suppose that the foregoing remarks are dictated by any preference for the ambitious system that we call popery, and which has ruled the consciences of men with an iron hand for so many centuries, he is egregiously mistaken. If in some respects more corrupt than the sister church in England and Ireland, the absence of state patronage has rendered it less injurious to the public interests, by disarming it of all pretence for

interfering with the legislation of the country. So far it stands upon its own proper ground, and whilst it continues to appeal solely to its own merits as a passport to public opinion it will excite no hostile feelings in any but fanatics. It is different with a state church, armed with exclusive privileges, and obtruding its pretensions in the affairs of civil life. Far from trusting to its own merits, it seeks adventitious aid, and passes off a political usurpation for the religion of the meek and lowly Jesus. With the doctrine and discipline of either church, it is not the present business of the writer to interfere. They are not questions for the arbitration of civil government, but rather of public opinion; which if enlightened by education, and unrestrained by legal enactments, will take the direction most agreeable to reason and utility. The disputes between Catholics and Protestants are never likely to be settled in any other way. They have both tried the effect of persecution, until they have emblazoned their own infamy. They have resorted to temporal allurements with no better success; and the missionary tours of theological knights-errant have proved an equal failure. It is time therefore to attempt a more rational course for reclaiming men from their errors; one that shall not interfere with their civil rights, nor with the christian precept of doing unto others as we would wish them to do unto us. It is too late in the day to set up a claim to infallibility; yet such a patent should be made out before we attempt the

establishment of any creed that is worthy of being called national. In the absence of an immediate revelation to confirm such a pretension, we must be content to deal with mankind as rational beings, leaving to them the choice of their religion, as of their trades and professions. It is true, that all sects claim a divine authority for their respective creeds, and assert them with equal confidence; but as it is impossible to settle their differences so as to give general satisfaction, a wise government will leave them all in the unmolested enjoyment of their good opinions; and declining the thankless office of defender of the faith, will administer the affairs of the world with a view solely to the relations of men in civil society.

It is not for religious, but for political and social purposes that men are supposed to combine together in national communities. The institution of an order of men for the performance of religious rites is a secondary object, not essential to the existence of government, although craft and superstition have so entwined them together as to identify their interests, and weaken the civil power by sharing it with the ecclesiastical. Knowledge of all kinds has suffered by the ill-assorted mixture, and most of all religious knowledge. This, to the uninitiated would seem a paradox; but history instructs us, that the nursing fathers of the church have been the tyrants of mankind, and the state dispensers of religion have been its great corrupters. Even if it were not so, a nation-

al religion is a mere fiction when it is powerless in producing uniformity, as must always be the case when the human mind does not lie stagnant. It is also injurious in aiming to keep that stationary, which nature intended should be kept moving. Truth is borne down by the load that is heaped upon it, and the human passions which should be trained to kindness, are steeped in the very gall of bitterness.

Nothing that has been here advanced is to be interpreted as militating against the utility of an order of men set apart from the rest of the world as the teachers of religion. In this capacity they may be exceedingly useful in training the young and the ignorant, and in imparting a moral tone to society. It is the abuse of the thing only that is to be condemned, and this abuse consists in taking them away from their proper sphere to swell the pomp of courts, to plunge them in political factions, and to desecrate their office by an unholy mixture with the secularities of the world: let them lay aside this amphibious character, and confine themselves to the proper duties of their profession, and they will meet with all the respect and attention which a prudent zeal and a single hearted sincerity never fail to command. A clergy thus circumstanced will be under no temptation to fight for political ascendancy, which the state reserves to itself. They will live in harmony with their fellow citizens undisturbed by the clashing of sects; controversies will lose much of their acri-

mony ; and with fewer temptations to distract the mind, they will find more leisure and inclination for the pursuits of learning and piety.

Upon so exciting a subject as religion, a quality common to all sects, it is the path of wisdom to avoid every thing that can foment the bad passions or produce a dangerous rivalry. Invidious distinctions between persons professing different modes of faith have a direct tendency to produce this evil, which is not compensated by the support that may be derived from one party ; because the strength that is thus acquired is more than counterbalanced by the weakness arising from the disaffection of others. The soundest policy is that which enforces the duties of impartiality and justice in the administration of civil affairs, and of neutrality in the religious contests of the people. A great statesman will rise superior to the narrow prejudices of cloistered bigots ; and instead of wasting the public time in a fruitless attempt to adjust the pretensions of rival sects, he will merge all distinctions in the comprehensive grasp of national legislation.

Supposing ecclesiastical property to be taken possession of by the state as trustee for the nation, the first inquiry is as to the mode by which it can be effected with as little injury as possible to vested interests, for if the work be accomplished peaceably these must be respected. With regard to the fixed property of the church, such as bishop's lands, cathedral estates, glebes and such like, there is no difficulty, as the

course of nature would allow it to lapse gradually, when it might be realized for purposes to be stated hereafter. Its variable property consisting of tithes is a more formidable animal to deal with, by reason of their alienation from the church, and their transfer in numerous cases to lay-hands. Although this is a kind of property dependent upon labour in a given soil, over which the tithe owner in many cases possesses no controul, and might therefore be rendered valueless if suffered to lie in fallow ; yet, as private property however vicious in its origin must continue to be respected, there is no alternative but to give the lay-rector a fair compensation for what he loses out of the other property of the church, the calculation of its value to be made upon all contingencies ; for tithes must be utterly abolished both in name and things. Much of this property, leased upon lives, still belongs to the Cathedral clergy ; and in all such cases the lives may be allowed to run out without a renewal. This would be attended by no actual loss to the general fund, for, as the owner of the land lets it subject to the payment of tithe whether it goes into the pocket of the clergyman or the layman, it would follow the course of that species of property still remaining with the clergy. All tithe being tantamount to a rent-charge upon land must be dealt with accordingly. Its real value cannot be ascertained without an actual survey ; for the returns to Parliament being founded upon uncertain data, arising from private agreements often below

the real value, and these not always paid in full, are no guide in this matter. If a composition for tithe be no criterion of its value, neither is it so when taken in kind ; for to its extreme value in the market, must be added the cost of its produce to the farmer, for which five per cent would be a low valuation ; probably it approaches much nearer to double that amount.

As tithes must be got rid of altogether, it is now too late to talk of either composition or commutation. Nothing short of actual redemption will satisfy the country, or meet the real wants of the case. This will rest with the landlord, to whom it has been proposed by all parties, to transfer the payment of tithes ; and the farmer being relieved from the burthen can afford to pay a higher rent. The mode of effecting so salutary a change is very simple, and may be done in one of two ways ; either by setting out a portion of land equivalent to the value of tithe in perpetuity at so many years' purchase, to be converted into capital at once, or by levying an annual land-tax, with the power of redemption, at the option of the landlord. The proceeds from tithe as fast as it becomes capital should be laid out in land or upon government securities, forming with the fixed church revenues one general fund, the trustees being the chief ministers of state for the time being. For the management of this property, it would be necessary to create a new department of government, the chief to be called " The minister of public instruction for

Ireland," who should have a seat in Parliament. If he be a Peer, then his principal secretary to sit in the Commons. This property being under the control of Parliament, an account of the income and expenditure, would be tendered annually, specifying the charges for management, and the mode in which the whole is applied.

It is easy to perceive, that if the whole of the Irish church revenues were to be resumed by the state in some such mode as is here specified, the real income would turn out to be far more considerable than appears upon the face of the returns, perhaps not less than double the amount. The fines received for the renewal of leases, not taken into that account, but which form a most material branch of revenue, now absorbed by the superior clergy, would go into the general fund, and be made available for the purposes of public utility. In fact, whatever comes under the notion of ecclesiastical property, and however now disposed of, would be provided for by the same general law, and be subject to the same management. If this arrangement were carried into effect, the annual grants to Maynooth College and to the Irish Presbyterians might be saved to the public, as those interests would be otherwise provided for.

When the funds are realized the next question is, How are they to be disposed of? The solution of this is the more difficult by reason of existing prejudices, and the power that wields them. Having been conceded by the State to an exclusive sect of

Protestants for the space of nearly three centuries, these will naturally grasp at them in spite of the prior claims of the Catholics. But possession by no means involves an equitable right; and if the supreme power does not step in to do justice, the common sense of mankind will arbitrate between the parties. It is quite clear, that until some certain defined principle is laid down and acted upon by the State in relation to this matter, and in vindication of a superior claim, the prize will ever be an object of contention, and its decision will depend as heretofore upon the power of the sword. Besides the uncertainty of such an appeal, if it be indeed uncertain when the odds are so fearfully against the Protestants, it is a barbarous mode of settling a political question; and that government is weak indeed, that allows itself to be rode rough-shod by the ecclesiastical power. It is not so in Catholic countries; yet this Protestant nation, which boasts of its superior freedom and intelligence, is actually in greater thralldom to the priesthood than our Catholic neighbours. The reason of this may be its strong sympathy with the aristocracy, which upholds it for political purposes; and their interests being mutual, it is quite impossible that the government of this country can be carried on for objects purely national until this power be broken.

It is essential to the well ordering of society that the civil power should be supreme in all causes, lay and ecclesiastical. The extraordinary influence ob-

tained by the clergy after the fall of the Western Empire, in consequence of the gross ignorance of the laity introduced them to the councils of princes, and gave them for ages an unlimited sway in the affairs of the world. Their superior learning having advanced them to temporal authority, they employed religious imposture to enslave the mind ; and with the keys of both worlds in their keeping, it is not surprising that they should found a dominion which could be undermined only by the slow progress of reason, amidst the opposition it had to encounter. The change from Popery to Protestantism made but little difference in the claims of churchmen, although the civil power asserted a supremacy. Their pretensions to church-authority, derived from the old story of St. Peter and his keys ; their assumption of worldly dignities and wealth ; and their co-ordinate exercise of civil functions remained the same. So that whatever changes passed over dogmatic theology and ritual observations, nothing was abated in the political character of the church, which continued to exercise an influence in civil affairs injurious to the interests of society, and alien to the spirit and design of christianity. To this mixture of temporal objects with the concerns of religion, Ireland is indebted for what is termed *Protestant ascendancy*, with its accompanying evils, bigotry, agitation, and bloodshed.

It is not to be supposed, that the Catholics are at all behind their Protestant brethren in their aspirations after the honours and wealth in which they

have been supplanted by the dominant church. Protestants would have taught them the lesson if they had not learnt it before. Although now dependant in a great measure upon their own people for support, it is quite natural that their clergy should wish to resume their former position, and that they should feel impatient under the control of a small body of men with whom they possess no kind of sympathy. The golden rewards offered to the cupidity of ecclesiastics will always be an object of ambition to those who take a secular view of religion ; and notwithstanding the disclaimer of the Catholics, it is easy to foresee that unless the State shall take full possession of the whole revenues with a view to a national distribution, nothing can prevent their falling into their hands, and that at no distant period. We may go on to despise them as an undisciplined multitude unable to cope with British bayonets ; but it behoves us to recollect that numbers inspire a moral courage, and moral courage when enlisted in a rightful cause, is capable of creating a physical force that will sweep everything before it.

The experiment of an exclusive church establishment, fostered by the State and fed with ample revenues, has been tried in Ireland and proved a signal failure ; that is for all the legitimate purposes that can be assigned for so costly a machinery. Whatever success may have rewarded the zeal of Protestants in upholding their religion or in gaining

converts, belongs chiefly to the unpaid sects, or to the ill-paid of the establishment, who, unfettered by, or breaking the trammels of episcopal regularity, have gone into the high-ways and hedges, visiting the cabins of wretchedness, and gaining upon the affections of the people by the persuasive acts of a pure benevolence. But the tithe-gatherer and the tithe-consumer are their abhorrence, and equally so the ecclesiastical system which depends upon them for support. The Irish people know well its political character, and for what object it is maintained; and as that object is anything but national, it is not surprising that they resort to extra-legal measures to cut off the sinews of the system, and that the savageness of manners which it engenders tends fast to the dissolution of society.

The maintenance of Protestant ascendancy through the medium of an establishment, whether by building churches, or by any other artificial means, is now no longer possible. Whatever progress Protestantism may make in Ireland must be effected by a more rational appeal to the understandings of the people. Religion must come before them stripped of its secular character, and clothed in the mild spirit of christianity; they must be instructed in their civil and social duties, and in the principles of morals that are common to all religions; they must be trained early to habits of brotherly kindness and affection; and experience must assure them that there is no

longer a distinction of caste amongst those who tread the same soil, and rear its produce for the sustenance of man, without respect to person, sect, or party.

It was long since a favourite project with the Whigs to pension the Catholic clergy in order to bring them within the influence of the State; and there are strong reasons for believing that the Tories are not averse to such a measure. Fortunately for the nation, the Catholics themselves have resisted it, for wise and politic reasons, no doubt; otherwise a generous but over-burthened people would have had to provide at this time for another swarm of clergy, whose claims it must be confessed are quite as good in principle as any that can be advanced by their more fortunate competitors. If the project should ever be revived in the same way, that is by a Parliamentary grant, it is to be hoped that it will be successfully opposed by those who do not wish the nation to be encumbered by another church establishment, to kindle new embers of civil strife, already too numerous for the cunning of all our tried statesmen to smother. If it be deemed advisable to give stipends to the Catholic clergy, they should arise in all justice from the existing ecclesiastical revenues, seeing that in *foro conscientie* they have the most equitable right to the whole. The only mode of settling this question finally, because justly, is for the State to realize the whole of the church property in the manner before suggested; and after providing for the education of the people, which is the first

thing to be attended to, then to apportion stipends to the teachers of religion in the three prevailing sects; these stipends to be regulated by a given scale, answering to the merits of the case, and to be granted only upon petition, after a proper investigation, by persons duly authorized by the minister for public instruction. This would not interfere with the scruples of those who may choose to rely upon what is called "The voluntary principle;" for as it gives them nothing, so it would take nothing from them.

Upon a thing so arbitrary as the amount of stipend, it is necessary that some defined principle should be laid down, and the best that suggests itself is one that has respect partly to locality and partly to the number of persons constituting a congregation. Of the latter a *minimum* should be fixed, below which no demand could be made on the fund. The allowance might vary from £100 to £500 a year, according to the nature of the case. It has been contended by those who deny the possibility of a surplus, which certainly would not exist under their management, that an income of £300 or £400 a year is the lowest amount at which it would be possible to secure the gentlemanly services of men properly educated for the purpose. Besides the gross reflection conveyed by such a notion upon the motives of men who profess to be moved by the Holy Ghost when they go to the bishop for ordination, and who are supposed to be animated by an apostolical zeal for the religious

instruction of their neighbours, it is itself altogether a fallacy. If the larger stipends had been all reduced to that scale for the purpose of raising those that are beneath it, the proposition would have come with a somewhat better grace. But it is notorious that the services of the same class of men are to be obtained at a much lower rate, numbers of them now receiving not more than from £50 to £75 a year. Now, if a man of gentlemanly education can be obtained to perform the work for so small a sum, as is notoriously the case in hundreds of instances, then all that is paid over and above is so much money thrown away or expended in a manner quite foreign to the object. For it cannot be pretended that the excess arising from the product of a living, and spent perhaps in another country, by a person called a rector, who contributes nothing in the shape of personal service, is at all necessary to secure the object in view, namely, the religious instruction of the people. This excess, therefore, beyond the marketable price of labour, would yield a good surplus to be applied to a more useful purpose. The estimate here contemplated, however, has been formed upon a more liberal scale. In country places, where the Protestants are few in number, from £100 to £200 a year would be a sufficient remuneration where living is so much cheaper than it is in England; and in addition to this, minister's money, arising from the voluntary offerings of the people, might be still retained. In populous towns the stipend might be fixed at £300 a year.

By this arrangement the working clergy would in most cases be greatly benefited; and they are the only persons worth consideration in a matter where the instruction of the people is concerned. As Catholic priests are under a vow of celibacy, a smaller income would suffice, say £100 in the country, and £200 a year in towns. The Presbyterian clergy to be placed upon the same footing as other Protestants.

In the rural districts, where there are no Protestants or next to none, it would be proper to give up the churches to the Catholics; for it would be useless to retain them without a congregation, and absurd to do so for the sake of turning the parson into a sinecurist. A reservation might be made for its joint use by the Protestants in case they should ever be sufficiently numerous to need it, as is the practice upon the continent; the times for worship to be arranged for the mutual convenience of both parties. In towns where the Protestants of either persuasion are of sufficient number to constitute a congregation, long prescription will entitle them to a preference in the use of the church; and when either of the parties may require additional accommodation, encouragement should be given to the erection of new buildings upon an economical plan, by contributions from the fund, the people requiring such advances to make good the remainder. To each church, let a dwelling-house be attached with an acre of land for a garden. The incidental expences attending the administration of public worship, provided for until

lately by a parochial rate, would be raised more properly by periodical collections at the church-doors, after the manner of the Dissenters ; and as the church party is in possession of the greatest wealth, it will require only a moderate portion of the zeal displayed by other sects to realize ample funds for the purpose.

Under this system there would be no benefices without churches, nor churches without congregations ; neither would there be any pay without the performance of duty by the person receiving it. Pluralities would cease, and there would be no sinecures for nonresidents. The drones that now infest the church for family or for political purposes would no longer find a slumbering place to repose upon, nor be fed at the expense of other men's labours ; each one would cultivate his own vineyard, and reap the reward of his exertions. The office of a religious instructor would then stand some chance of being respected by the people, as his motives would not be suspected ; and few would enter upon the employment without a conscientious desire to fulfil the duties attached to it. These duties can be performed only by what are called " The working clergy," who should be the only stipendiaries so far as concerns the fund at the disposal of the State. It may be fairly presumed, that such a change would have a friendly aspect upon the relation between pastor and people, and that there would be more likelihood than there seems at present of the latter rivalling their Scottish neighbours in moral and religious knowledge.

If it be asked, what is to be done with the superior clergy? That is with those who do not sustain the pastoral office, such as bishops, deans, canons, prebendaries, and a variety of other official personages who serve to swell the pomp of an establishment, but contribute nothing to the people in the shape of religious instruction, the answer is, that under this system the State does not interfere in any way with their appointment, nor does it provide for their support. It leaves Catholics and Protestants precisely upon the same footing. The former elect their bishops and support them; the latter should do the same. In a country like Ireland where there are so few Protestants of the Episcopal persuasion, it would be as useless as it would be offensive to map the whole country into dioceses, as under the old regimen. Wisdom would suggest an entirely new arrangement, more conformable to the interests of religion, and to the efficiency of that mode of discipline. Of those who do not indulge the vagaries of apostolical succession there are many who prefer the episcopal form of church-government as most conducive to order, and the fittest channel for the conveyance of ordination. These may be left like other people to follow out their own plan; for with the internal economy of sects, the State can have no pretence to interfere. If such persons, therefore, desire a long catalogue of idlers under an imposing array of ecclesiastical names, it would be competent for them to realize their wishes, only the burthen of supporting

them should rest with themselves. The toys of full-grown children are always costly ; and if they delight to play with them, it is but just that it should be at their own expense.

A bishop being an overseer of the flock, according to the original meaning of the term, one such might be placed in every large town, where there is a population of Protestant Episcopalians, giving him a district sufficient to form a council of Presbyters within a convenient distance, over whom he should preside, and without whose advice and assistance he should perform no act of an ecclesiastical nature ; the Presbyters to elect their own bishop from amongst themselves upon every vacancy. For his maintenance he should have the principal church in the town with a stipend of £500 a year ; and to assist him in his pastoral duties, which he would have in common with the other parochial clergy, he may be allowed a curate with a sufficient salary, say £200 a year, to be paid from the ecclesiastical fund. If it should be thought needful to raise his revenues to a larger amount agreeably to the notions which some men attach to the episcopal dignity, let the clergy within his district tax their own livings for the purpose, at a rate to be settled amongst themselves ; for it is only equitable that those who desire the benefits of an episcopate should contribute towards its support. An appeal might also be made to the generosity of its lay-supporters, whose zeal for the cause, if we may judge by some late displays of it, would no doubt

induce them to contribute of their superfluous wealth, in order to give all the consequence they desire to the episcopal office. They might adopt the custom of an annual benevolence, if so inclined, in the shape of a new-year's gift, or bishop's offering. As the attendance of the bishops in Parliament would be dispensed with, and they would be relieved from the secular affairs that now entangle them, a much smaller income than they now enjoy would suffice for all useful purposes. They would also have more leisure to devote themselves to spiritual objects, and if they are so inclined to literary pursuits.

One of the arguments insisted upon by the Episcopalians for the retention of sinecures, is, that they are so many prizes held out as rewards for the encouragement of talent, which would not be forthcoming without such an excitement. This is no better than a libel upon learning and genius, to say nothing of religion; and it may be presumed that the diligent portion of the clergy are not at all flattered by this impeachment of thir motives. Besides, it is one of those fallacies that impose upon nobody; for it is quite notorious, that these prizes are awarded most generally to the sons and nephews of bishops, the relatives and friends of courtiers, or the lucky tutors of ministers of state. The road to preferment has been usually through any channel rather than the right one; professional eminence being of small account with politicians who have the richer prizes at their disposal, and with whom reli-

gion is of inferior consequence to political influence. But the pretence set up for sinecures will not bear examination, and, happily, the feeling of the age is against them.

With regard to patronage, when it shall cease to be a traffic for money and influence, or a bounty upon idleness, as would be the case under the proposed system, its value would sink considerably in the market. Lay patrons would no longer have the strong motives that now impel them, and might be induced to relinquish the right altogether. But if retained, its exercise would be subject to the approval of the bishop and his clergy; and the congregation in all cases should have a *veto* upon the choice of the person who is to be their spiritual instructor. The recommendation of the bishop and clergy would have the advantage of securing an efficient and properly qualified ministry, whilst the *veto* of the people would guard against the imposition of a spiritual guide who may chance to be obnoxious to them. None but natives should be promoted to Irish livings; and it is desirable that they should be taught their vernacular language to prevent the inconvenience of speaking in an unknown tongue.

In order to secure the advantages of a learned ministry (and none but empirics in religion will undervalue its importance) one or more national universities should be established, in order to afford a liberal education to those classes of the people that are in circumstances to afford it; and to diffuse its benefits

as widely as possible, the expense should not be greater than is necessary to procure the best materials for the purpose. As there is no royal road to learning, there should be no distinction in the treatment of the students, nor in the habits they wear. Expensive amusements should be avoided and encouragement given to manly exercises. Every thing in the shape of dissipation should be proscribed, and no debts allowed to be contracted without the permission of the tutors. If the universities consist of an assemblage of colleges, as seems desirable for the preservation of discipline where large numbers are congregated together, each college would have its head, its tutors, and its subordinate officers. In some, a particular branch of study might be pursued with greater vigour than others, such as national law, medicine, mathematics and physics; but a general education should be given in all.

Knowledge, natural and moral, so far as the same can be developed by the force of human intellect, is the proper object of public education. It belongs to no sect nor party, neither does it interfere with the dogmas of any man's creed. The instruction communicated in these colleges, therefore, would be neither Catholic nor Protestant, Presbyterian nor Episcopalian; so that the professors of the sciences might be selected from either indifferently, with a sole reference to personal fitness. For, it would be absurd to suppose that the profession of any particular class of religious tenets disqualifies a man na-

turally for teaching the sciences. In spite of the arrogant pretensions set up by the church of England to a monopoly of education, and conceded too readily by the state, the practice of continental Europe would give the lie to so idle a fiction.

But if college instruction be of that universal nature that all sects might reap its advantages without injury to their religious scruples, it by no means follows that religion should be banished altogether from these seminaries. There is an easy way of compounding the matter without violating the sanctuary of conscience, or feeding the bigotry of intolerants. As a considerable portion of the students would be intended for the profession of divinity and others might have a laudable desire to become acquainted with the subject, the difficulty would be met by connecting with each university *three* schools of Theology for Catholics, Presbyterians, and Episcopalian Protestants, headed by professors of each faith. These would deliver lectures upon the evidences of christianity, upon the transmission and interpretation of the sacred books, upon ecclesiastical history and upon the tenets of their respective creeds ; and the students from all the colleges would be allowed to attend the Theological schools, making their own selection according to their respective tastes and inclinations, guided as they would be in most cases by the wishes of their parents. Three chapels should also be attached to each university for the celebration of public worship according to each mode ; and the

students should be required to attend one or other of these twice every Sunday, as also for daily prayers. According to this arrangement, there are probably but two classes of people whose religious scruples would be materially affected, the Jews and Quakers ; and these being minor sects there could be no inconvenience in allowing them small chapels for the celebration of their harmless worship in their own way.

In this enumeration of sects, I have confined myself to ecclesiastical differences ; for those of a doctrinal nature are the less necessary to provide for, because amongst the adherents to each, in spite of recognized creeds, and formularies, there will be found persons professing every shade of opinion upon the most important subjects, whether these respect the nature of the Supreme Being or the terms of acceptance with him. Amongst the tutors and professors, therefore will necessarily be found these differences, which besides administering to individual tastes, will possess the advantage of stimulating inquiry, and of fixing more effectually a rational conviction of religious truth. To the objection that has been raised against the admission of opposing opinions into schools of learning, as calculated to unsettle the mind and give currency to error, it may be answered, that the imposition of creeds offers no security against these effects, which will work their way silently if not allowed to do so openly. As creeds are human compositions, the chances are always

against their truth, sufficiently so certainly to warrant examination and possibly their rejection, for it is not to be expected that any creed-maker can draw all mankind along with him. Besides no religion is worth teaching that will not bear examination, and it is the business of the tutor to state all opinions fairly, so that the student may be at no loss for arguments to defend those that come home to his conviction. But, after all, it is facts rather than opinions that the tutor has to deal with ; and it is upon these that the student should be instructed to build his faith.

In a scheme for national education, the creeds and articles that serve to fix the boundaries of particular sects must be wholly discarded. The only test at all necessary is a declaration upon entrance in the nature of an engagement to observe the rules of the college, and the laws of the university ; a breach of them to be punished by expulsion. The arguments advanced in behalf of creeds by those who advocate an exclusive system of education are completely nullified by the experience of mankind, as well as by common sense. An uniformity of opinion it is beyond their power to produce, and a blind assent is worse than useless, its natural tendency being to convert men into fools or hypocrites. If the mind be unemployed, it can produce no effect, and its certain result will be an inglorious inanity. If directed into a single channel, it will be like teaching geography through the medium of a map of a single

country; ignorance and bigotry cannot fail to be the consequence. The effects of the exclusionary system are to be seen daily in the very partial and limited information of those who aspire to be the teachers of religion, and in the bitterness which they indulge towards persons of other creeds. The only cure for these evils is a liberal education conducted upon the principles of investigation, and of a free converse with men and things; and the last is only to be attained in a mixed community. It has been often argued, that the natural tendency of this mixture of persons of different creeds is to produce strife and contention; therefore controversy must not be encouraged. It should not be allowed indeed to interfere with the regular routine of studies, which the authority of the master will be sufficient to prevent. But, not to observe, that the opinions of a youth can be of little value until he has made them his own by enquiry, the circumstance of collision is calculated to sharpen his faculties and to store his mind with ideas which he would not otherwise possess. Private debating societies amongst young men of different opinions during the hours of relaxation, if conducted with decorum, would have an admirable tendency to enlarge the mind, and to communicate those facilities for public speaking which are useful in so many walks of life. The inconveniences that are anticipated may be counteracted by prudent management, and it may be presumed that such an employment would be fully as

useful as bacchanalian clubs, or hours wasted in frivolous amusements.

It is not pretended that the extinction of sectarian ascendancy which has been maintained hitherto by an exclusive establishment in connection with affiliated political societies, will be an effectual cure for all the evils that have hitherto afflicted Ireland. As one of the master abuses that stands in the way of just and impartial government, its removal will go far towards the cure of popular discontent, and the furtherance of schemes for the civilization and improvement of the people. This establishment has been always considered by them as the evil genius presiding over their destinies, leading to endless strifes, tumults, and bloodshed. If the system were the best that human genius could devise, still being at variance with the feelings of the people, it is absurd and unstatesman-like to persist in its retention. A quiet death is upon every account preferable to a violent one, which otherwise most assuredly awaits it, and will sweep away the whole of its revenues. The supporters of the Protestant party, as they call themselves *par excellence*, are much mistaken in their efforts to make a religious question of it as between Protestant and Catholic. It is purely a national one between the established church of Ireland and nine-tenths of the population, professing for the most part the Roman Catholic religion. In the preservation of that establishment a very considerable portion of the Protestants of England, Scotland and

Wales possess no sympathy, and will never be induced to fight for it. Those therefore who array the millions in one island against the millions in the other, overreach themselves ; for, if the votes were taken, the probability is, that the church of England and Ireland would be found in the minority.

If the incubus that now presses upon the peace and prosperity of Ireland were removed, the means might be found to raise the people from their moral and political degradation. The wealth now expended on a few Protestants might be made available for the education of the whole people ; and without education it would be in vain to expect from them either obedience to the laws, or such an use of their rational powers as would turn to their own benefit or to the advantage of society. In order to this, schools must be established in every town and village of the island not upon the sectarian system of creeds and catechisms, which has been the nursery of ignorance and the bane of Charity, but upon the broad principles of national utility, supplying all the materials for an useful education, and embracing all the children of the community. To secure their efficacy, the machinery of the schools must be worked by competent persons educated expressly for the purpose, with a sufficient salary annexed to their office. The education dispensed in these seminaries should be adapted to the genius and the future prospects of the scholars, whether for trade, agriculture or the learned professions; and if some rational amusements and

athletic exercises were incorporated in the system, they would produce a beneficial effect in after life, substituting habits of refinement for those of a gross and demoralizing nature, that now pervade both Irish and English society. Reason would guide the master in classing his pupils according to their respective ages and capacities; and to facilitate this, an elementary school should be annexed to each establishment, from whence the children might be drafted at the discretion of the master. In these schools religion should not be taught as a science, being a fitter subject for an university education; but the pupils may be instructed in the principles of morals, and trained in virtuous habits, which will surround them with a moral atmosphere, favourable to the cultivation of piety, and the developement of the best affections. Discarding the patch-work morality which engenders hatred and strife, the young should be taught to love each other as the children of one common parent, to whom they will be accountable hereafter for their actions. They should be made early to distinguish between real and artificial knowledge; between that which we derive from experience, and that which we receive upon the report of others. Instead of superseding the judgment and torturing the mind with unintelligible dogmas embodied in catechisms, it should be led by easy steps to profitable knowledge, and impressed with generous sentiments, taking care to enlist the affections in the cause of kindness and charity; we shall then go far in creating a moral and virtuous

population, the best ground work for the peace of society. Then, whatever creed may be impressed upon the child by his parents, who are his natural instructors in such matters, he will have learned so much of Christianity as to love his neighbour, and respect his scruples, and instead of pointing him out as an object of hatred for his opinions, he will rather pity him for his errors, whilst he treats him as a man, and as a brother.

In a well-ordered community, the school discipline will extend to all children from the age of six to that of fourteen, no child to be employed during the intervening years in any work of labour, excepting by its own parents or guardians, and not by them during school hours. The strong attachment to liberty so conspicuous in the British and Irish people, although without any well defined notions upon the subject, would seem to present a formidable obstacle to any compulsory system of education. Yet if this liberty be so far restrained that we punish men for the commission of crime, there seems no very good reason why the laws should not take cognizance of the best method to prevent it. We consider it a great offence (and justly so) for any man to trespass on his neighbour's property, or to offend his senses by open acts of indecency; yet it may be doubted if a civilized community has any more right to tolerate ignorance than it has to tolerate vice, which is its natural offspring. Education has been justly considered as one of the most valuable gifts

that a parent can bestow upon his children, and the want of it has been severely felt by those who have broken through the disadvantages of early life, and have risen to opulence. It is now too late to combat the reasons that have been urged against universal education, since all sects and parties are now embarked in it, striving to outvie each other, not perhaps from the best motives, but with sufficient zeal to sanction the principle and produce a beneficial result. It is true, there are other evils at work in society besides ignorance that contribute their share to the production of crime, which is not confined altogether to the uneducated. Perhaps vice will be found to prevail most in the two extremes of society, arising no doubt from different causes sufficiently obvious not to be mistaken. But if any proof were wanting, besides the reason of the thing, of the power of education in the mitigation of crime, it is furnished by some statistical tables published in France, which give the following results, being the yearly average for five years, from 1828 to 1832.

Persons wholly untaught	4471
Persons who can read and write but a little	2026
Persons who can read or write well	746
Persons having received a degree of instruction beyond mere reading and writing	172

The undue importance attached to the church establishment, chiefly upon account of its enormous revenues and its political influence, although disguised under the mask of religion, has made large

draughts upon popular credulity ; but it is at length discovered that the system has acted with a paralytic effect upon the progress of knowledge, and the real interests of religion. By an act passed in the 28th year of King Henry the VIII. and still unrepealed, every clergyman upon being inducted into his benefice, was made to swear that he would maintain a school for the education of the people of his parish ; a portion of his revenues being then considered as sacred to that purpose. Whether the oath be now taken is unknown to the writer ; but the rest of the act has become a dead letter. Instead of being the guardians of education, the clergy were long opposed to, or neglected it altogether as concerns the poor, until aroused from their apathy by the exertions of other sects. As a natural consequence, their pulpit services, for which they are so well paid, are thrown away upon those who stand in most need of them ; the poor having an inaptitude for instruction by reason of their ignorance, or absenting themselves altogether for want of sufficient motives to command their attendance. Without wishing to undervalue the benefit that is derived, or supposed to be derived from the services of the clergy, it may be safely asserted, (and anyone who chooses may satisfy himself of the fact,) that in all populous places this benefit is conferred chiefly upon those who can afford to pay for it, and actually do so in those churches that are most resorted to. For many years past an attendance upon public worship has become so much a matter of

fashion, that the poor, if they were disposed to attend, are nearly excluded for want of accommodation. In the new churches, indeed, some provision has been made for remedying this evil; but it is quite a mistaken notion, that the mere building of churches is adequate to supply the ignorant with the sort of instruction which they stand in most need of.

The argument to be drawn from these facts is, that the wealth of the Church is now inefficiently appropriated, and would turn to much better account if devoted to the education of the people upon a large and comprehensive scale, preparing them to receive with much better effect any instruction that might be given them from the pulpit and reading desk. In point of practical utility, no man in his right mind will pretend to deny, that the services of the clergyman are secondary to those of the schoolmaster; although craft in the first instance and afterwards political expediency assigned him a post in society altogether incompatible with his legitimate functions. It is no compliment to the system of religion misnamed the Church of Ireland, to rest its existence upon the retention of its temporal revenues. If worth preserving, the withdrawment of the whole would not affect its stability, but would tend most probably to promote its efficiency. When thrown upon public opinion, like other sects its merits will be canvassed with greater impartiality; and as these are represented to be above all praise, they will not shine by a borrowed lustre, but receive all the sup-

port that can be exacted from its most devoted admirers. Large as are the sums raised by other Protestant sects, as well as by the Roman Catholics, they are drawn almost entirely from the middle classes. But the church establishment boasts aristocratic patronage, and encloses within its fold, as we are informed by its advocates, all the wealth and intelligence of the land. With such high pretensions, such ample funds, and so much zeal displayed in its behalf, there can be no deficiency in the supplies that are now coveted as earnestly as if the kingdom of heaven was in danger. But a prudent foresight may supersede the necessity for levying so large a demand upon the sympathies of Churchmen. All the real wants of Protestantism may be adequately supplied, and leave a large surplus for national education. It is not difficult to foresee, that unless the revenues are so appropriated, and that promptly, the whole will be swept away, the tithes into the pockets of the landlords, and the church lands into others equally unclerical.

It would be a gross deception practised upon the public if it were pretended that the settlement of this church question even upon so rational a basis as is here suggested, would produce a sudden revolution in the minds and habits of the Irish people, so as to reconcile them to their condition, and put an end to all motives for agitation. The removal of so capital a grievance would no doubt accomplish much, although time must be allowed for cooling the pas-

sions that have been brought into play by the acts of the spoiler. Poverty is another load upon the shoulders of the people that requires instant relief: for wherever it exists in any extensive degree, it will always furnish reasons for discontent, and a state of ignorance bordering upon barbarism will give it a lawless and savage direction.. Education will provide the means for removing those anomalies in the political world which press upon industry, and counteract the beneficent designs of nature. It will raise man from that state of degradation which is the consequence of ignorance, and enable him to employ his powers, both moral and physical, in the improvement of his condition, and in the advancement of human happiness. Whether a system of poor laws be desirable for Ireland is a matter for grave deliberation. There can be no doubt that nature intended every man to live by his labour; but the appropriation of the soil having restricted his means by accumulating the portions of many in the hands of one, society is bound to provide some remedial measure to compensate for the loss sustained by such an arrangement. The poor are therefore a rent charge upon the land-owners, upon whom they have every natural as well as moral claim for subsistence.

But besides the evils here glanced at there are other obstacles in the way of improvement, which it will be well for our legislators to look fully in the face so as to supply an adequate remedy. Nature, all bountiful in her provisions, has caused the earth and

its surrounding elements to teem with abundance for the supply of man in all his varied necessities. His constitution mental and physical is also admirably adapted to enable him to avail himself of this supply; and if feeble as an isolated individual, he becomes strong in society, a leading object of which is the developement of his powers, and the giving them an useful direction. Hence, the vast importance of an adherence to nature so far as is compatible with the ends of society in political institutions. It may so happen that the advantage of living in a civilised community may be purchased at too dear a rate; and this is just so when any considerable portion of the people become tillers of the soil, but are shut out excepting in the very slightest degree from any participation of its produce. Poland which has been blotted out from the list of nations presents an example of this sort, and Ireland affords another. If the union were dissolved to morrow, and no steps taken to remedy this evil, the people would profit nothing; they would but exchange their task masters, and the lands their feudal proprietors. Before Ireland can prosper, the people must be raised from their state of beggary, destitution must give place to a tolerable share of comfort, and their demoralising cabins which associate them with the brute creation must be replaced by something like human cottages. In order to this, some attempt must be made towards effecting a wider distribution of property. According to returns that have been made

upon the subject, it appears that more than 19-20ths of the whole real property in the country, is possessed by a handful of Protestants, mostly absentees, and as much foreigners as if they resided in Hungary. To aggravate the evil, a class of semi-landlords are introduced to enrich themselves at the joint expense of the proprietor and the tenant; for the accommodation of the one and the oppression of the other. This system of underletting has been long the bane of Ireland, and can tend only to the impoverishment of the many, for the sake of enriching the few.

The proprietors of the soil should live upon that soil, and manage their own affairs, if they wish them to be managed well. This is a compensation which they owe to their tenants, with whom they should be in frequent communication, protecting their interests, and seeing that they are not oppressed. As they derive their wealth from the soil, it would be no transgression of nature's laws if it were spent in the country where it is produced; indeed, some might argue, without being thought ridiculous, that it would contribute materially towards its prosperity. The great difficulty is, how to effect so great a good without violence, which would be only shifting the evil. There are two ways of doing it without loss, if the English proprietors could be brought to so cheap a mode of displaying their patriotism. One is by disposing of their lands in convenient portions to natives, or to new settlers, as purchasers may arise,

increasing thereby the number of proprietors and consequently of consumers ; the other is by alienating their lands to younger branches of their own families upon the express condition of their becoming domiciled in the country. In addition to this the introduction of gavel-kind would be one of the greatest blessings that could befall the people. The only plausible objection to this is, that the entail of property, agreeably to the custom of primogeniture, is necessary to the preservation of an aristocracy. Even if this were the case, it may be doubted if the benefit be not purchased at too dear a rate. But admitting the utility of such a class, which it is not intended to deny, there are means for its preservation without so flagrant a violation of the laws of nature. Superabundant wealth is by no means necessary to constitute an aristocracy as some of our peers can testify; and as there should be no restraint upon property except in cases of intestacy, and of the failure of direct heirs, it would be always competent to the head of a family to transmit a sufficient portion of it with the family residence to his next representative. There is also such a thing as an aristocracy of talent, which in the eye of reason has the best title to government : and if the legislative peers were to be made elective, it would obtain that influence in human affairs to which it is every way entitled. Certain it is, that nothing can compensate for the evils that flow from the law as it now exists, a law in opposition to nature, demoralizing in its effects, and inju-

rious to that liberty which is the natural birth-right of nations.

It would tend much to the prosperity of Ireland, and to the creation of a resident gentry, if it possessed provincial assemblies in the form of parliaments, say four in number, answering to the four provinces, for the transaction of all local concerns that come before the legislature in the shape of private bills, such as canals, rail-roads, bridges, hospitals, gaols, and other matters of petty legislation. The details in all such cases, and the private interests likely to be affected, would be best understood in the vicinity of the places where they are wanted ; and any general regulations to curb monopolies or injurious speculation, might be fit subjects as national measures for the imperial parliament. In order to give the effect of law to such local acts, they may be submitted to the privy council, and if there approved receive the king's signature. Much of the time now consumed upon such subjects to the great delay of public business in the national legislature would be saved thereby, and it would have more leisure to attend to the political and financial concerns of the country.

No government can be carried on in a safe and satisfactory manner that is not assisted by the voice of the people. This can be obtained only through the medium of popular institutions based upon the principle of representation ; and the more widely this principle is diffused, the greater will be the security

for rational liberty, and for the stability of the state. The best mode of government is that presenting a system of checks rising one above the other; for man is too imperfect a being to be trusted with irresponsible power. It is therefore necessary to divide the powers of government by the institution of local assemblies, that the people may be taught to govern themselves, and assist in revolving the wheels of society. In order to this every town and village in the island should possess an efficient local government for the management of its own concerns, and to be answerable for the peace and good conduct of the inhabitants. When sufficiently large to admit of a municipal corporation, it is decidedly the best form; and to secure the respect and confidence of the people, it must be based upon popular election, the qualification being that of a householder. Even the smallest village should not be without a resident authority to arbitrate differences and to preserve the peace. All towns should possess a resident magistracy; and villages also where such can be obtained. In the construction of these authorities it may be needless to remark, that the varieties of opinion pervading the nation, whether they be political or religious, should form no consideration: for justice, peace, order, and good government belong to no sect nor party, or rather, all are concerned alike in their preservation. With a government thus wisely ordered and skilfully managed through its varied mechanism, with an educated people and a removal of all just

grounds for complaint, arising from sectarian partiality or local abuses, and with a gradual diffusion of property so as to furnish employment for the people, and enable them to reap the reward of their labour there would be no need of a standing army ; peace and goodwill would take the place of discord and hatred, and the country might be made to produce an ample supply for all the wants of the inhabitants.

It is in vain that we seek a remedy for national diseases by patch-work legislation, endeavouring to accommodate the interests of particular parties by conceding from time to time just so much and no more than is absolutely necessary to avert the inconvenience of a dangerous pressure from without. A wise statesman will instruct himself in the true principles of government, as founded upon the capabilities of man and his wants in society. Whatever difficulties obstruct his path, he will still keep these principles in view, adapting his means to the end, remembering that government is a human device for restraining the bad passions of our nature, and assisting the people by wise institutions to produce for themselves the largest amount of happiness. For the accomplishment of these objects he will encourage knowledge and industry, he will remove the barriers that have been raised by ignorance and error, and substituting reason for prejudice he will no longer think of governing a people upon the narrow principle of setting one portion of them in hostile array against the other ; the natural effect of all ex-

clusive systems, whether in politics or in religion. The wisest course in political affairs is always the safest. As reason unfolds men become acquainted with their rights, which are not to be measured by the caprice of governors, nor by the dogmas embodied in creeds; neither would they, in truth, be so judged of, were it not for the appropriation of ecclesiastical wealth in subserviency to the schemes of politicians. Upon this point, Ireland demands and must obtain justice; not by the transfer of power from one party to another, but by an equalization of political rights, and an impartial distribution of public benefits. It will be wise, therefore, to lay down in time a just and liberal scheme of government for Ireland, banishing for the moment the priests of all sects in oblivion, and dealing with the people as citizens of a free state, entitled to equal laws, and these adapted to their nature as reasonable beings and moral agents, possessing all the capabilities under proper management of becoming a great, an enlightened, and a prosperous nation.

It would be too much to hope for such a desirable system of government from men intent only upon power and patronage to advance the interest of a party. By such the author's lucubrations will be treated as utopian, and called impracticable. The practicability of a thing, however, is only relative. If not opposed to nature there are means in being for its accomplishment; and the obstacles being of a moral kind, are capable of being overcome. That

they will be so is another thing; but we are not to confound the possible with the impossible because it is the pleasure of statesmen to do so for their own convenience. Those who have watched the progress of events during the last half century, have witnessed changes quite as improbable as any that are here indicated. Years before they happened, they would have been set down as utopian because incompatible with the policy which statesmen judged it for their interest to follow; but public opinion proving too strong for them, they succumbed to necessity. It may be so with regard to Ireland. But if they remain obstinate, the laws that bind the two countries together will be as the cords that bound Sampson, and meet with no better fate; and the opportunity for substituting a government of reason for one of force will be lost for ever. In that case, those who now hold the destinies of Ireland will look back with regret upon their own infatuation, and see how utopian were their own schemes for propping up a crazy system that required only the touch of reason to crumble it about their ears.

There is no lack of venal and soft-headed persons to raise the hue and cry against honest men who prescribe a disagreeable remedy for national diseases. At one time, the church is said to be in danger; and the state being always secondary according to approved usage, is lost sight of in the greater calamity.*

* At all public dinners given by a certain political party, the standing toast is "Church and King;" a somewhat curious reversal of

To be sure, the notion is somewhat stale; yet having succeeded heretofore in catching so many fools, it is not surprizing that knaves should still resort to it as a tempting bait for so useful a purpose. But men are grown somewhat wiser, so that it does not succeed quite so well as it did in the days of Sacheverell and Lord George Gordon. It is now found out, that the revenues of the clergy are not the church, that deans and chapters are not religion, and that the office of a christian bishop is somewhat different from that of a Lord bishop. Those who have paid any attention to inquiries so foreign to the habits of statesmen need not be informed that religion is wholly a concern between man and his maker, that the administration of it is a matter of taste and convention regulated by the opinions of the parties, and that it can subsist by its own energies without the intervention of cunning men to prostitute it for their own temporal advantage. Those who represent the political establishment of christianity as essential to its preservation, entertain very mean notions of the subject, as well as of the motives that actuate its teachers. If they believed themselves they might be

the order of loyalty not quite in harmony with the law of the land. But when the fumes of intemperance take possession of the brain our thorough-paced royalists are not always regardful of consequences. They may be excused, therefore, in such fits of absence for taking an excursion to the land of the Monikins where the *tail* is in greater request than the *head*, the post of honour being assigned to the former in exact proportion to the length and breadth thereof.

sent to the college of fishermen to correct their opinions ; but knowledge and experience are thrown away upon men who identify religion with worldly dignities, and consider it of no value when shorn of political influence.

A system of religion adapted chiefly to courtiers and country gentlemen, for whose benefit it mainly exists, is undeserving the comprehensive character of a national establishment. Such persons are fully able to bear the expense of its maintenance without drawing upon funds that would be applied more appropriately in providing instruction for those who cannot afford to pay for it. The spectral apparitions that pass before the eyes of certain politicians inducing an uneasy trembling for religion are nothing more than a hypocritical pretence for saving the pockets of the rich. That the support of Christianity depends not upon a well paid army of ecclesiastics in the keeping of the state, is apparent from the successful exertions of the unpaid sects. It is true their clergy lay no claim to apostolical succession, nor do they pretend to extraordinary gifts ; and they may be so far unfortunate. They are also less learned, less polite, and less burthened with wealth than those within the pale ; yet in spite of these disadvantages they are treading fast upon the heels of the establishment, and supplanting it in the affections of the common people. Whatever may be the quality of their teaching, their indefatigable labours betoken any thing but an indifference to Christianity,

but their zeal for its diffusion will bear a safe comparison with that of the stipendiaries of the establishment. Should these therefore desert their posts as seems to be apprehended, there need be no alarm for the fate of Christianity, which has so many to plead for it without their allurements. For some of the disadvantages experienced by the clergy of other sects, they are to be lightly reproached by their episcopal brethren, since it is to them that they are indebted for their inferiority. Not satisfied with a monopoly of ecclesiastical wealth, they have taken care to close the doors of education to all but their own party, so that if churchmen are better educated than other people, they owe it to exclusive privileges, unwisely conceded by the state. Perhaps the time is not far distant when so absurd a distinction between people dwelling in the same country, speaking the same language, and paying taxes to the same government, shall be thrown down. That it should have existed so long is a reproach to the nation, and a disadvantage to the state, whose clear interest it is to extend the benefits of education as widely as possible. Narrow-minded bigots seek only the aggrandisement of their own party, insensible to the ridicule and contempt which they draw upon themselves by their folly ; but it is not thus that governments can afford to trifle with the prejudices of mankind or to alienate the affections of a people. Whatever pretensions may be advanced by interested narrow-minded persons in behalf of such a favouritism, their encourage-

ment by the state is nothing less than political insanity.

Another deception practised upon the weak and timid is that of representing the friends of political improvement as levellers, revolutionists, and republicans. That such will be found in every country where distress and ignorance prevail to any extent is a fact not to be denied; and that the passions of such may be easily excited by any adventurer who expects to profit by confusion, may be equally true. But this is nothing to the purpose, and those who vociferate the loudest in this way know it to be so. However, if it serves to catch fish in the drag net of party the end is answered, and those who are to profit by it are not very scrupulous about the means.

That the events of the last century have brought to light many errors in society, and contributed to diffuse sounder principles upon government, is a fact attested by legislation, as well as by the present state of political philosophy. The American War and the French Revolution were events of sufficient magnitude to shake the relations of society, and give rise to many speculations at variance with the ancient systems upon which it was modelled; nor were these likely to be refuted by the profligate wars and wasteful expenditure that followed. The reverse in fact proved to be the case; and in spite of the plottings of despots, assisted by the wealth and the blood of Englishmen, there has been a growing appetite for free institutions in most of the nations of Europe.

In this war of opinion the principles of government have been forced by necessity upon the public mind; and as mankind are too apt to run into extremes, especially when goaded on by suffering and despair, it is not surprising that many should have taken refuge in republicanism as the only visible escape from a single despotism. But that republican principles prevail to any extent in the British Islands, excepting perhaps amongst the lowest orders of society, is a notion too absurd to be entertained. Some few indeed may have taken them up as a matter of speculation, or as the only practical remedy in their apprehension for those constitutional diseases that have arisen from the overpowering influence of wealth and station in the control of public affairs; and the best mode of confuting them is to shew that there are sufficient pliancies in the British constitution assisted by enlightened reason to meet this and every other evil. After all, it does not appear that there is any great disaffection to the triple form of our constitution, which is regarded by reflecting men as capable of realizing all the purposes of good government, and of moulding the institutions of the country so as to secure the largest measure of freedom that is compatible with the public safety.

Differences no doubt exist, as they always must amongst thinking men, as to the nature and extent of regal power, and the expenditure arising from the artificial trappings of monarchy; as also upon the constitution of a peerage, and the construction

of a legislative assembly. Men may also entertain serious doubts upon the propriety of continuing the heterogeneous mixture of ecclesiastics and their concerns with civil polity, viewing it as an impediment to legislation, and a vicious remnant of the barbaric ages. Upon these and other points of inferior detail men may differ variously, without any desire to level the distinctions of society, to revolutionize the country, or to subvert the mixed form of government that is entwined around the relations of British society. Of artful men, there are always enough to take advantage of the indiscretions or bad designs of a few, for the purpose of branding others and enlisting support to a cause that can be maintained only by misrepresentation and imposture. These are the arts that upright and conscientious men must expect to encounter, and if assailed by bitter invective or low and vulgar abuse, they must set it down to a feeble cause that requires means so extraneous for its support. Armed with conscious rectitude they may defy the arts of their assailants, confident of sufficient power to unmask their sophistry; whilst scorn for the braying of fools will lead them to treat all their scurrility with cool contempt.

After all that can be said, reason and experience are the only solid foundations for government. However much men have diverged from them in accommodation to circumstances, or by taking advantage of the ignorance of mankind, there is no just ground for fear as to the result. The violent pas-

sions, stimulated by interested motives, must be expected to act upon a large portion of society until men are taught better. But the schoolmaster and the steam-engine will unite their forces to bring them to their senses; and when they shall have fully developed the powers of man, "The strong shall be as tow, and the maker of it as a spark,—And the mean man shall be brought down, and the mighty man shall be humbled, and the eyes of the lofty shall be humbled. But the Lord of Hosts shall be exalted in judgment, and God that is holy shall be sanctified in righteousness."

THE END.

